



PHOTO BY T. ANTHONY BELL

The 2007 U.S. Army Reserve Culinary Arts Team is the first Reserve Command team to enter the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition.

U.S. Army Reserve Accepts Culinary Challenge

Reservists Combined Recipes for Success, Stir it Up at Army Culinary Arts Competition

by T. Anthony Bell

Fort Lee Traveller

Fort Lee, Va. -- The U.S. Army Reserve Command never could muster enough interest to field a team in the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition.

Until now.

Thirty-two years and many efforts later, a team of food service specialists have stepped up to the plate for the groundbreaking opportunity to represent the Reserve in the country's most prestigious military cooking contest.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kelly Sholes is the manager for the Reserve team. The 104th Division (Institutional Training) food service professional said the team's participation in the

event, that runs through March 16, is a milestone for the Reserve, but more importantly, a substantial training opportunity for Soldiers.

"It's a very high privilege and honor to represent the U.S. Army Reserve in the show," said Sholes, based out of Washington state. "It is an opportunity that will allow these Soldiers to take what they've learned back to their units."

The Army Culinary Arts Competition has attracted the military's best culinary talent since its inception. The event is sanctioned by the American Culinary Federation and has been featured over the years in various media to include The Today Show, CNN and the Washington Post.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bob

Nieves, a professional chef based in New York and Reservist assigned to the New York's 8th Medical Brigade, noted that the Reserve's entrance in the competition represents the culmination of more than a year of coordination and planning.

"It's been a goal of the Reserve for a while," said the team captain. "It was just the matter of getting everything coordinated because you're dealing with so many subordinate units. It's not like having an Active-Duty post where you have Soldiers there all the time. You have (Reserve) Soldiers working only two weeks in the year and one weekend a month."

The team is comprised of nine Soldiers from units based from New York to California and in between.

Because Soldiers were scattered at



PHOTO BY MIKE STRASSER

U.S. Army Reserve chef Sgt. Joseph Parker receives his critique from the judge, March 5, in the Senior Chef of the Year event during the 2007 U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va.

locations all across the country, the team didn't have much time to prepare for the competition. It wasn't until January that team members could gather here for about two days to get acquainted with one another and learn to function as a team. Nieves said it was a big challenge.

"Granted we could have used months to practice and months working together," he said. "But we have people who were dedicated. We had people purchasing all the items, practicing stuff at home and bringing equipment here. We had one Soldier drive all of her equipment here just to make sure she had everything."

Joseph Branch. Assigned to the 63rd Army Reserve Command, he said he had never heard of the competition but has absorbed so much, he wished he had. "It's been awesome," said the San Bernardino, Calif., native. "It's amazing how much I've learned and how much I've been exposed to."

Nieves said that although the competition is a learning experience for the team, it has exceeded all expectations. As of March 8, the Reserve team had captured two silver medals and two honorable mentions in the competition. "We're extremely proud of ourselves,"



PHOTO BY T. ANTHONY BELL

The U.S. Army Reserve's Spc. Patrick Alveranga uses a blender during the Junior Chef of the Year competition March 6.

For many of the team members, the competition has been an enlightening and enriching experience. Just ask Staff Sgt.

he said, "and I'm proud of them. This team has virtually no training together, came in, started working and already we've won a couple of awards."

Team member Sgt. Joseph Parker said the Reserve's competitiveness is an indication that the Reserve can no longer be considered a reserve, but a true operational element on par with the Active Army."

"We want people to know that we are the USARC," said the Soldier, assigned to 841st Combat Engineer Battalion. "We also want them to know that we can fight like them and cook like them."

For more culinary competition photos and articles, visit www.ima.lee.army.mil/sites/pao/2007_CulinaryComp_Dailies/about.htm